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ABSTRACT

This article highlights a teacher education program conceptual framework that integrates service learning. It first describes the national scene and offers details on the college, which is a mid-sized public college in rural upstate New York. The college's mission includes a call for broad experiential learning and community service as a way to reach excellence in learning and best serve the state and community. The college opened the Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC) in 1995 to help faculty and students develop a general orientation to service and community involvement. Faculty from the Division of Education serve as advisors to the CSRC. The conceptual framework evolves around four themes related to teachers taking leadership roles in their classrooms and communities: educational leader committed to excellence, best teaching practices, diversity, and empowerment. Service learning is included as an important strategy for meeting course objectives across the education program. Service learning projects are grounded within each theme of the conceptual framework and demonstrate four levels of integration: sharing resources, sharing time, sharing knowledge, and sharing self in collaboration. (Contains 36 references.) (SM)

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Abstract. The pursuit of national accreditation has led many teacher education programs to review their programs and make substantive changes. This article describes a teacher education program conceptual framework that integrates service learning. The conceptual framework evolves around four themes related to teachers taking leadership roles in their classrooms and communities: educational leader committed to excellence, best teaching practices, diversity and empowerment. Service learning is included as an important strategy for meeting course objectives across the education program. Service learning projects are grounded within each theme of the conceptual framework and demonstrate four levels of integration, a sharing of resources, time, knowledge and self.

Service Learning Integrated into a Conceptual Framework Improves a Teacher Education Program

Many states are embracing higher standards in education including national accreditation for programs in teacher education. A road often chosen for accreditation is National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The decision to seek national accreditation for programs in teacher education and school personnel led a mid-sized public college into a challenging process. This process enabled the faculty to review the college's mission and reframe its philosophical foundation and conceptual framework. This was done in light of national trends, community needs, and published research and reports. The mixture of standards and commitment to service has lead to detailed program revisions and stronger programs for future educators.

In this article, we will discuss that journey. First, we will set the stage by describing the national scene and a couple of key points about the college. We will then describe more fully our conceptual framework, goals, and themes, and the integration of service learning into those themes. We will review the levels of service learning as they are evolving as an integral part of the education program and courses, the rewards and challenges of this process, and, finally, our plans and next steps that include assessment.

The national scene and college setting

Educational reform has had a tremendous impact on education and teacher education. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation at Risk. The researchers found that students' educational performance was declining. The commission recommended that students should spend more time learning basic subjects and that teacher preparation programs should be improved. In 1990, the Holmes Group published Tomorrow's Schools and outlined principles to improve teaching and learning. It spoke of learning to understand and stressed the need for higher standards.

In 1996, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future wrote What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. The document reasserted the need to honor teaching as a profession. It proposed the goal that by the year 2006, "America will provide all students in the country with what should be their education birthright: access to competent, caring and qualified teachers"(p.21). The Commission's plan is aimed at ensuring that all schools have teachers "with knowledge and skills they need to teach so that all children can learn" (p.vi). While addressing issues of recruitment and school structure, it also recommends interlocking changes, stating that standards are important for students and teachers. The plan further states there is a need to reinvent teacher education preparation and professional development. These changes must push teaching into the realm of a true profession that speaks to accountability and high standards. The people in this profession must have preparation that is systematic, integrated, and tied to solid research and best practices. This calls for a conceptual

framework that is used to design the teacher education programs which explicitly states the philosophical foundations.

On July 1998, the New York State Regents passed a far-reaching policy statement entitled "Teaching to Higher Standards: New York's Commitment." This policy statement restates the calls for reform and demands for higher standards, including national accreditation and accountability. The regents had already passed new standards for pre-K through 12 schools, including new curriculum learning standards and higher learning outcomes for students. This July 16 policy statement restated the need for highly qualified teachers. The policy also indicates that "high standards must drive this reform.... We must create an educational system in which caring and competent professionals enable all of our students to master the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in the next century" (p. 1). This policy is a passionate commitment to the students and New York State, affirming that the very future of both rests on highly qualified educational professionals.

In addition to this national scene and discussion around reform in education, the importance of service and community involvement is much in national and local mindset. In 1982, Harvard president Derek Bok challenged academic institutions to consider their obligations to the community beyond the institution and include these as part of their educational mission. Bok's call for the "American University" was met with increased attention paid to service and its role in learning. The National and Community Service Trust Act, passed in 1993, created the Corporation for National Service (CNS) to engage all Americans in community-based service. As a measure of the central role in this process, the CNS sponsors Learn & Serve America: Higher Education. Learn & Serve

has three objectives: 1) to support the development of infrastructures for service learning across institutions of higher education; 2) to support service learning as an approach to teaching and learning; and 3) to engage students in meeting community needs and serves as a funding source for institutions addressing those objectives (CEA, 1997). As a result of both motive and support, educators have begun to include service learning projects in classes across the college curriculum.

It is in this setting, both nationally and at the state level, that the college made the choice to move to national accreditation for its teacher education and school personnel programs. This move needed to keep in mind the mission of the college and the students it serves. The college is a mid-sized public college with around 6, 000 students, with one-third of the students in education programs. The college serves New York State residents and is located in a rural setting in upstate New York.

The college is committed to service as an important component of college life. The college's mission includes a call for broad experiential learning and community service as ways to reach excellence in learning and to best serve the state and local community. Based upon its history, the college received a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to open the Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC) in 1995. This Center assists faculty and students in developing a general orientation to service and involvement in the community.

Faculty from the Division of Education serve on the Faculty Advisory Council to the CSRC. They assist in planning ways that faculty can implement service learning projects in their classes and determine appropriate sequences that students might follow to develop skills in planning, organizing, and conducting service projects in our

immediate area and on a national and global scale. Students, under the direction of faculty, are increasingly involved in the community as part of their course work and as individuals. The local community highly praises the many hours of service done by the college students and faculty.

The Framework and Goals

The goals of the education programs at the college are to facilitate each individual's fullest development as a professional educator and to create a transformational education program for the 21st century. Based in a constructivist approach to learning (Zahorik, 1995), the integration of service-learning into the programs and course work was seen as an opportunity to enrich the curriculum and facilitate the development of truly national educational leaders. This approach is seen as an important method to assist future teachers reach the high standards that are critical to the programs. Service-learning also provides an opportunity to develop a strong sense of social responsibility through participation in service projects and involvement in the community. The goal is to develop educators who will be committed to building relationships between their work place and the community and who are involved with social and political issues that shape their community. Not only are educators professionals in their classrooms, they are leaders in their communities.

The central assumptions for the conceptual framework are:

1. Teachers/educators are important and should be reflective educational leaders committed to service and service-learning and the development of their own caring, transforming, learning communities; and

2. Students can learn not only facts and contents, but also how to think deeply and critically, especially if they have opportunities to integrate service-focused experiential learning.

These assumptions were more fully developed in the four themes that are being used to design all aspects of the programs. The first theme is "education professionals committed to academic and professional excellence." This theme asserts the importance of a liberal arts education (Dill, 1990, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). It focuses on developing personal goals of excellence and develops critical thinking and communication skills. This theme also focuses on the candidates' growing awareness of self situated in both the local community and broader society. The candidates develop and document their progress as learners throughout their collegial work in various disciplines and in professional education courses. Much work is linked to service and the community as a way to help develop excellence and provides a way to integrate the material into the everyday activities of the community and schools.

The second theme, which focuses on understanding learning and pedagogy, is "educational professionals committed to best teaching practices." This theme calls for the development of abilities to create positive learning environments based on research models of teaching and learning (Brophy & Good, 1994). It also encourages reflection about practice with the goal being to constantly improve the learning situation (Schon, 1990). This reflection requires a systematic, concerted synthesis of theory and practice that is exhibited and documented, as well as a personal commitment to self-directed, life long learning. Reflection is central in the definition and practice of service learning and is seen as central to the move to best practices (Erickson & Anderson, 1997).

Understanding that educators are members of the global community is the central aspect of the third theme. This theme is that "educational professionals are committed to respecting diversity." The school communities of the 21st century will increasingly be diverse. This theme calls for educators to understand their own history, culture, and background (Banks, 1994; King, Hollins & Hayman, 1997). In addition, they understand the importance of discovering the history, culture and background of their students as well as the local community. They have developed ways to use this understanding not only to increase acceptance of differences, but also to promote learning (Vogt, 1997). This assists their students in becoming more fully self-directed learners and in reaching high standards. Beginning in the first courses, work is linked to the community. The work with the community and in schools provides candidates with an introduction to individuals and communities that are different from their own. Service learning, as an instructional method, assists the candidates in internalizing and integrating a more sophisticated understanding of diversity and its importance in the classroom.

The most unique theme is the fourth theme. It is that "educational professionals are committed to empowerment." This theme assumes that educational professionals are leaders of the community (Sergiovanni, 1996). This cannot happen unless there is an understanding of the community and significant involvement with its members. It also requires an understanding of leadership that embraces change. Being a transformational leader requires work as an agent of change (Burns, 1978). This agent strives to empower all students to achieve their full potential as learners, as well as to become participating members of the community (Shor, 1996). This kind of leader recognizes the importance of the members of the community and uses that to facilitate creating a common vision of

excellence in learning. Service learning gives the candidates opportunities to be involved in the community and to practice the role of being an agent of change that empowers both the students and members of the community. Candidates learn the power of embracing family and communities in creating environments that help students learn. In addition, these experiences often lead the college students to a growing sense of the importance of giving back to the community through service.

Service learning is central to each of the four themes and is being integrated into the curriculum. This integration is being done in the required core courses, methods courses, student teaching, and many courses in liberal arts areas. The integration has produced a growing sense of how valuable service learning is to achieving the goals of each theme of the conceptual framework. It also has lead to the beginning awareness of levels of service and the need to move from level to level in a developmental progression that enhances learning for the candidates.

Levels of Service Learning as an Evolving Process

Service learning is a constructivist teaching methodology designed to provide students with a means to contribute to the community through service experiences; reflect on those experiences in the context of course work; and learn more about themselves, the community, coursework and relationship among them (Coles, 1993, Erickson & Anderson, 1997). Service experiences can take multiple forms and provide for a variety of benefits to those who provide service as well as to the recipients of service (Coles, 1993). Future educators who take part in service learning programs benefit by seeing the ways in which they connect to, and are a part of, the community. They learn that the role of teacher is not, and cannot be, confined to the classroom (Fullan, 1993, McIntrye, 1994,

Sergiovanni, 1996). Raising consciousness is an integral part of any service-learning program.

The development of this service program links to current practices in curriculum and instruction by applying a Vygotskian model of scaffolded learning experiences. Students are asked to gradually develop and apply skills for a variety of community based service projects. The faculty member teaching a course that involves a service project acts as both instructor and mentor to assist students in developing a service plan of action and in evaluating that experience in the context of course-specific goals and objectives.

The program goal is to establish a scaffold of service across education courses, from distant to collaborative. Students will develop a sense of civic responsibility, professional responsibility, and community (Coles, 1993). Students will also learn about the discipline of Education, the roles that teachers play in the classroom, the school and the community. Students will develop skills in critical thinking and communicating their ideas in a variety of forms. There are many different services that students can provide and there are many ways that courses in a pre-service education program can incorporate a service project. Service projects can be classified in terms of the content and purpose of the service and the ways in which that service can contribute to the development of an educational professional.

Level One: Sharing Resources. The first level of service is the most distant. At this level, candidates are involved in recognizing a community concern and acting on that recognition. In recognizing and making a contribution toward eliminating or alleviating a community concern, they begin to take on a sense of civic responsibility (Coles, 1993). Candidates remain within their own cohort and are not directly exposed to the need they

address. The recipients of service remain in categorical form, for example "the poor," "the immigrants," "the reservation schools." Little personal cost is exacted other than time spent on the fundraising activity; however, this kind of service is particularly important in developing a life-long commitment to a community. This kind of project raises the questions of why these challenges exist, and what are the social and educational policies that continue the conditions. Palmer (1987) holds that the act of knowing itself, if understood rightly, is a bond to the community; it is a bond linking the individual, the knowledge, and the community. This kind of bond and knowing is the goal.

Our introductory Education class, Issues in Education, is designed to meet objectives regarding self awareness as life-long learners. Specifically, students are encouraged to see themselves as entering a profession that requires both a local and global perspective in understanding a sociology of education. The class is also designed to assist students in meeting objectives related to the development of written and spoken communication skills. Working on fund raising projects and reflecting on those experiences require that students apply and further develop communication skills and a sense of self connected to an institution within a community.

Pre-service educators taking introductory courses in Education have raised money for national and local agencies including the Cancer Society, March of Dimes, Hospice, and cooperative education programs in foreign countries. These activities are usually chosen jointly by the faculty and candidates and are loosely tied to the coursework and professional goals.

Reflections for this first level of service guide candidates in identifying their roles as members of the community at large, and in evaluating the experience of making

contributions to the community. The goal of such service learning experiences is to create a sense of commitment to members of the community who face challenges that the pre-service teachers do not. They "feel good" about the activity, especially when they are successful in raising significant amounts of money. To move beyond that "feel good" stage, reflections must be guided in such a way that candidates recognize that the feeling of accomplishment represents a link between themselves and the community which must be fostered.

Level Two: Sharing Time. The second level of service requires that pre-service educators make direct contributions of their time. Candidates taking introductory courses in diversity and foundations of education are involved in this second level. Candidates are involved in providing indirect service, but from a position that is physically closer to the recipients of service. Primary service, in this case, is working in soup kitchens, office help for social service agencies, organizing donations of food or clothing (folding clothes for Salvation Army and similar organizations). Candidates may, or may not, be in direct contact with recipients of service, but there is no established way for the groups to interact. Candidates remain within their cohort and as a group begin to experience on a more personal level what the community problems look like. Still, this is a step more comprehensive than simply raising money because students see the recipients of service or they see the settings in which recipients are served. The needs of the poor become a greater reality when candidates see food bank shelves, or clothing rooms and the people who frequent them (Bellah, et al, 1991). The Foundations of Education course objectives include developing an awareness of the sociological problems faced in schools today as

the institution attempts to deal with challenges created by the changing family system, poverty, violence, and the rapid change that is a hallmark of the 21st century.

Reflections for this second level of service guide future educators in making connections between course materials and services provided. They also begin to address student attitudes toward groups other than their own and students begin to re-evaluate their prior conceptions of these "others." These reflections are less about responsibility to the community than they are about making salient the difficulties faced by individuals and families, such as the challenges faced by many families to simply feed and clothe their members.

Level Three: Sharing Knowledge. The third level of service takes into account that candidates are developing a set of pre-service skills that they can share. In an introductory Reading course, future educators raised money and then purchased books for a local Head Start program. The goal was to purchase enough books so that each child could have a book to take home. Candidates applied their skills in selecting developmentally appropriate books and supported a "parents as reading partners" program sponsored by a local Head Start. In this case, the candidates did not work directly with the children or their parents, yet provided a real service to them.

This level of service also includes provision of information via observations. Candidates taking courses in child development observe in classrooms and provide feedback about children and their behavior to the teacher. They provide a "fresh" set of eyes and, while focusing on understanding children and meeting course requirements, they also provide teachers with valuable information. The learning goals for development courses are that candidates make a connection between theories and research about how

children learn and how they develop social skills and how related behaviors play out in classroom settings. For example, development courses include the study of gender differences in performance in Math. Candidates observe teachers' patterns of communicating with boys and girls in their classrooms. Candidates then share their observations with the teachers. Often teachers are unaware of biased patterns in favor of calling on boys in the Math classroom.

Reflections for this level of service assist candidates in drawing connections between specific content of their coursework and its application. These reflections become more analytical and begin to develop in these future educators the application options for the material they study in class. Here is where praxis truly begins, seeing theory put into practice (Friere, 1970).

Level Four: Sharing Self in Collaboration. The fourth level of service is one in which candidates begin to see themselves in partnership with the recipients of service. Candidates are involved in providing direct personal service. They engage with the recipients and recognize that while they are providing service they are also benefiting from the experience. Candidates and recipients of service identify shared goals and work toward those goals collaboratively over time. This collaboration enables them to see that life and the world is not a nice predictable package. They work with a variety of individuals and none of them follow any exact prescription for learning.

For example, candidates in foundations of educational psychology courses work as reading tutors with children. The children receive help with reading; the candidates learn the surprising variety of ways children learn. In a special education class on mental retardation, candidates work with people with mental retardation. The candidates gain

experience working with special populations and also identify gains in understanding those with special needs. The people with mental retardation receive individualized service and opportunities to interact with the broader community. In a reading class, future educators recommend materials and participate in the NAACP Read-a-thons with children and parents. Candidates learn to evaluate and choose reading material that engages diverse audiences. They also evaluate the reading level to ensure it is appropriate for the reader and work with the parents to develop effective reading and literacy habits.

Reflections for this fourth level of service guide candidates in recognizing the multiple perspectives individuals bring to their lives and learning. This often means they overcome their stereotypical thinking about different groups by having opportunities to establish relationships with people different than themselves (Langer, 1989). The greatest gains for future educators tend to be the realization that people have many dimensions, gifts as well as challenges. Candidates often recognize the faulty assumptions they had made about people different than themselves. The reflections also aim at making connections between course content and direct application of that content. Future educators evaluate their attitudes and skills as they interact with others and many report that their attitudes and expectations were dramatically altered as a result of this kind of experience.

The levels of service learning selected by course instructors are dependent upon the course objectives, centrality of the service learning experience to meeting those objectives, and the candidates' prior experiences with community service. Introductory courses include service learning projects at the lower levels of service and the advanced

courses require higher levels. Students and faculty report their experiences have been consistently positive, especially those experiences that are most closely tied to course objectives (Curran, 1998; Black & Page, 1999; Shastri, 1999).

Rewards and Challenges of the Process

The education division faculty embraced service learning because they had a long history of designing experiential learning activities in the program. They were also very committed to working with the community and schools. Many already were doing service personally and had moved to incorporate these activities into their courses. While they recognized the amount of work involved, they repeatedly heard from students about the value and long lasting effect on their learning and memories of the courses and program. The seed of commitment was already present and this set the stage for very valuable discussions around course objectives and ways to enhance and improve service learning. The conversations among faculty were constructive and very positive as more and more moved to further integrate service and service learning in individual courses and the programs.

One of the challenges of the process to further integrate service learning into the program is to educate the larger college community and faculty that service experiences have academic value (Hammond, 1994). Much discussion is centered around why students are forced to be volunteers and why faculty needed to include service learning in their courses. The discussions were often heated and confronted concepts and beliefs about academic freedom. Formal hearings and staff development continue to help faculty tie academic goals to service and to move experiential learning activities to a

fuller link to service. Both service as an outcome and service as linked to understanding course content need to be continually valued and integrated.

Beyond the challenge of convincing the college community of the value of service learning as an authentic learning outcome for academic programs, the issue of implementation causes concerns. These concerns were most focused on the core courses and ensuring that all students in those courses have similar service learning experiences. There are limited placements in this relatively small rural town and ongoing positive relationships are critical to the college and central to the very existence of many programs. There is concern that agencies, schools, and potential sites for placements might be called too frequently by different people for a growing variety of reasons, thus disrupting already positive relationships (Johnson, Johnson & Young, 1997). This requires coordination in contacting schools, sites and community agencies among the education faculty but also between education and other departments that also interact with the same agencies. This requires lots of time and commitment on the part of the faculty as well as the staff at the sites. This continues to be a challenge.

An additional challenge relates to the tension between community needs and course/program learning outcomes. This requires flexibility and creative problem solving during a course. Sometimes the faculty had a hard time modifying assignments to meet the community needs. In addition, it frequently appeared there was the need to have on site supervision to ensure that the candidates are engaged in the agreed activities. Site personnel sometimes saw the candidates as available to meet immediate needs such as playground supervision instead of having the candidates do the negotiated activities, e.g. tutoring or being reading partners.

The effective use of service learning tied to content requires substantial reflection be done by the students. The faculty is challenged to design ways to promote this kind of reflection and not have thousands and thousands of papers to read. In addition, the nature of the reflection needs to be focused so that the desired learning outcomes are more likely. What must be prevented is that students interpret service learning activities in such a way as to reinforce stereotypes or misinformation about people or learning. This requires faculty to expand their own knowledge base to more effectively address misinformation, misconceptions, and stereotypes (Watts & Nashman, 1997).

Plans and Next Steps

The faculty need to continue to discuss ways to fully integrate service learning into all elements of the programs. Doing this will likely require additional staff to help with the coordination, and, as with all higher education institutions, this presents a challenge. A creative way to find sites and placements that meet the learning needs established by the faculty is needed. In addition, there is an imperative to assess the effects of service learning. Questions that need asking include not only those from the perspective of "are the students better learning the course content," but also "are they learning to value service and service learning?" In addition, assessments are needed to see whether service learning has improved long term transfer of knowledge and skills. Assessments of the effects of implementing a large scale service focus in a teacher-education program are needed.

The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) conducted consultations with more than 70 organizations interested in service learning programs which resulted in a set of principles of good practice with regard to service

learning programs (Honnet and Poulsen, 1989). These 10 principles have served as our criteria for developing effective service learning (see Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 here.]

Faculty at the college who have pioneered efforts to include service learning in their courses have used these guidelines to develop service learning projects that support individual course objectives. In addition, they have been doing research on the effectiveness of service learning in their individual courses. This research supports the continued practice of imbedding service learning in individual courses (Curran, 1998; Black & Page, 1999; Shastri, 1999). The Education division will begin more detailed evaluation of the integration of service learning into the entire education program using these 10 principles. In addition, assessments are being created to evaluate the effect of service learning on preparing future educators.

Summary

The faculty and the college have embraced service learning as a priority and a significant part of the conceptual framework. We built upon a budding tradition of service at the college and established consensus around this priority. The courses and programs have integrated multiple levels of service and forms of reflection. Currently we have excellent examples ranging from fundraising to tutoring to reading projects to collaborative service with agencies and schools. Our next steps are to enhance and evaluate service learning. We believe we are on the right road in our design to facilitate the development of excellent future teachers and educational leaders.

Table1

Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning

1. An effective program engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good.
2. An effective program provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience.
3. An effective program articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved.
4. An effective program allows for those with needs to define those needs.
5. An effective program clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved.
6. An effective program matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes changing circumstances.
7. An effective program expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment.
8. An effective program includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals.
9. An effective program insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved.
10. An effective program is committed to program participation by and with diverse populations. (Honnet and Pouslen, 1989)

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